WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A vehicle having a support structure for a spare tire comprising:

a shell attached to the vehicle, the shell including first and second end portions and a bottom portion extending at least partially between the first and second end portions, the shell at least partially defining a spare tire storage chamber and including an opening providing access to the storage chamber, the opening being adjacent to the first end portion;

a support member adapted to support a spare tire, the support member being slidably positioned above the bottom portion and movable back and forth along a movement path from a first position in which the support member is substantially disposed within the shell and a second position in which the support member is at least partially disposed outside the shell, the support member including a lower interface surface for directly contacting an upper interface surface of the bottom portion of the shell in sliding engagement as the support member is moved along the movement path; and

a retention member fixedly attached to the shell, the retention member permitting sliding movement of the support member along the movement path with respect to the shell, and being operative to limit movement of the support member with respect to the shell in at least one direction substantially perpendicular to the movement path.

2. The vehicle of claim 1 wherein the second end portion has an arcuate configuration corresponding to the curvature of the outer circumference of a spare tire.

3. The vehicle of claim 1 further comprising a stopper configured to engage the support member, the stopper being disposed adjacent to the second end portion.

4. The vehicle of claim 1 wherein one of the bottom portion and the support member includes an outwardly projecting protrusion and the other of the bottom portion and the support member includes a complimentary inwardly extending recess adapted to receive the protrusion.

5. The vehicle of claim 4 wherein the bottom portion includes an upwardly extending protrusion and the lower interface surface of the support member includes a groove configured to engage the protrusion.

6. The vehicle of claim 1 wherein the support member comprises an outer edge extending outwardly and generally perpendicularly from the movement path.

7. The vehicle of claim 6 wherein the outer edge is configured to interface with the retention member.

8. The vehicle of claim 1 wherein the retention member is integral with the shell.

9. The vehicle of claim 1 wherein the retention member includes a rotating member.

10. The vehicle of claim 9 wherein the rotating member includes a wheel.

11. The vehicle of claim 1 further including at least one additional retention member.

12. The vehicle of claim 1 wherein the vehicle is a pickup truck.

13. The vehicle of claim 12 wherein the support structure is attached to a bed of the pickup truck.

14. The vehicle of claim 1 further including at least one side portion extending at least partially between the first and second end portions of the shell.

15. A vehicle having a support structure for a spare tire comprising:

a shell attached to the vehicle, the shell including first and second end portions

and a bottom portion extending at least partially between the first and second end portions, the shell at least partially defining a spare tire storage chamber and including an opening providing access to the storage chamber, the opening being adjacent to the first end portion;

a support member adapted to support a spare tire, the support member being slidably positioned above the bottom portion and movable back and forth along a movement path from a first position in which the support member is substantially disposed within the shell and a second position in which the support member is at least partially disposed outside the shell, the support member including a lower interface surface for directly contacting an upper interface surface of the bottom portion of the shell in sliding engagement as the support member is moved along the movement path; and

the support member and the shell having a cooperative locking configuration for substantially inhibiting sliding movement of the support member relative to the shell along the movement path when the support member is selectively positioned relative to the shell.

16. The vehicle of claim 15 wherein the cooperative locking configuration comprises a complementary geometry.

17. The vehicle of claim 16 wherein the complementary geometry includes a flange and a recessed region.

18. The vehicle of claim 17 wherein the bottom portion of the shell includes the recessed region.

19. The vehicle of claim 17 wherein the shell includes a plurality of recessed regions.

20. The vehicle of claim 15 wherein the cooperative locking configuration

comprises at least one of a flange, a clip, and a hook.

21. The vehicle of claim 15 wherein the cooperative locking configuration comprises an aligned arrangement.

22. The vehicle of claim 21 wherein the aligned arrangement includes apertures adapted to receive a locking member to inhibit sliding movement of the support member relative to the shell.

23. The vehicle of claim 22 wherein the locking member comprises at least one of a pin and a rod.

24. The vehicle of claim 15 wherein the vehicle is a pickup truck.

25. The vehicle of claim 24 wherein the support structure is attached to a bed of the pickup truck.

26. A support structure adapted to support a spare tire for a vehicle, the support structure comprising:

a shell comprising at least one side portion extending at least partially between first and second end portions of the shell, the shell further comprising a bottom portion extending at least partially between the first and second end portions, the shell at least partially defining a spare tire storage chamber and further defining an opening providing access to the storage chamber, the opening being adjacent to the first end portion;

a support member adapted to support a spare tire, the support member being slidably positioned above the bottom portion and movable back and forth along a movement path from a first position in which the support member is substantially disposed within the shell and a second position in which the support member is at least partially disposed outside the shell, the support member including a lower interface surface for directly contacting an upper interface surface of the bottom

portion of the shell in sliding engagement as the support member is moved along the movement path;

a retention member fixedly attached to the shell, the retention member permitting sliding movement of the support member along the movement path with respect to the shell, and being operative to limit movement of the support member with respect to the shell in at least one direction substantially perpendicular to the movement path; and

the support member and the shell having a cooperative locking configuration for substantially inhibiting sliding movement of the support member relative to the shell along the movement path when the support member is selectively positioned relative to the shell.